



*Personal reflections on the struggle
for equality in the United States
and South Africa*

with

Diane Nash, Freedom Rider

*Sophie De Bruyn, Organizer of the
1956 Women's March*

Date: Monday, March 5

Time: 10:00 for 10:30 until 12:00

Venue: The Rosa Parks Reading Room
1288 Phera & Dlamini streets,
White City, Jabavu; Soweto.

Time: 10:00 for 10:30 to 12:00

Please RSVP to Sheila Goodgall by Friday, March 2
at goodgallse@state.gov





Bio: Diane Nash

Raised in a middle-class Catholic family in Chicago, Diane Nash enrolled in Nashville's Fisk University in the fall of 1959. Shocked by the extent of segregation she encountered in Tennessee, she became a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1960. In February 1961 she served jail time in solidarity with the "Rock Hill Nine" — nine students imprisoned after a lunch counter sit-in.

When the students learned of the bus burning in Anniston, AL and the riot in Birmingham, AL, Nash argued that it was their duty to continue.

"It was clear to me that if we allowed the Freedom Ride to stop at that point, just after so much violence had been inflicted, the message would have been sent that all you have to do to stop a nonviolent campaign is inflict massive violence," says Nash in the documentary film Freedom Riders.

Nash monitored the progress of the Freedom Ride from Nashville, recruiting new riders, speaking to the press, and working to gain the support of national movement leaders and the federal government.

Assistant to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy John Seigenthaler recalls a phone conversation with Nash where he tried to dissuade the Nashville Freedom Riders from going to Alabama, warning of the violence ahead. Nash replied that the riders had signed their last wills and testaments prior to departure.

Nash played a major role in the Birmingham de-segregation campaign of 1963 and the Selma Voting Rights Campaign of 1965, before returning to her native Chicago to work in education, real estate and fair housing advocacy.



Bio: Sophie Theresa Williams de Bruyn

Born in 1938 in Villageboard, Port Elizabeth, a multicultural area, Sophie de Bruyn began working during her school days at the Van Lane Textile factory, where co-workers quickly grew to rely on her ability to solve problems with factory bosses. At the textile factory, she rose to become an executive member of the Textile Workers Union in Port Elizabeth working alongside people like Raymond Mhlaba, the late Vuyisile Mini, Govan Mbeki and others.

She became the founder member of the South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU), which is the predecessor of the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU). In 1955, de Bruyn was appointed a full-time organiser of the 'Coloured People's Congress' in Johannesburg.

When the Coloured Population Act was put forward, Sophie was assigned by the Congress to work with the lawyer Shulamuth Muller, an attorney whose husband, Mike Muller, was secretary-general of the Textile Workers Union and was already banned. Together they helped to organize the women around pass issues with women such as Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi and Rahima Moosa. At the same time Sophie was at the forefront of the Congress Of the People in Kliptown.

She led the Women's March to the Union Buildings in 1956 and is the only surviving leader of the historical event. She currently serves as a human resources manager and a commissioner at the Commission for Gender Equality. She is a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC Women's League and is a member of the Saartjie Baartman Reference Group.